

The Connection

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2021

John E. Watkins President 604 Country Drive Hope, AR 71801 870-777-2814 watkins-john@att.net	David Mayo Sr. Vice-President 21 Shawnee Forest Cv. Little Rock, AR 72212 501-224-5215 david.mayo@sbcglobal.net	Johnnie L. Parks Vice-President 6608 Chateau Drive Little Rock, AR 72209 (501)565-9657 vmpparks7@att.net	Doyle Hughes Secretary/Treasurer 9112 Leatrice Dr. Little Rock, AR 72227 501-227-3819 etusnavy@aol.com	Larry Dickerson Member-Retirement Board 238 Trelon Circle Little Rock, AR 72223 501-425-3778 dickerson.larryd2016@gmail.com
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Year End Summary from Larry Dickerson

The close of the fiscal year June 30, 2021 marked a very positive year for our retirement plan. As financial markets negotiated COVID and anticipated where there would be financial recoveries, our money managers did an excellent job selecting investments that captured impressive gains.

The preliminary investment return for the fiscal year was 29.86% gross of fees and 29.06% net of fees. We closed the year net assets of \$1.7 billion compared to \$1.4 billion in the previous fiscal year.

The year also had a Legislative session where our plan was very involved in passing legislation that will have a positive impact on our plan for years to come.

A summary of this legislation is:

1. A sliding employer contribution rate based on actuary calculations to keep liabilities at 30 years unfunded level. (This would be a safety net);
2. The employer would pay contributions on employees in the DROP;
3. Phase in employees paying contributions while in the DROP;
4. Change the final average salary used in the benefit calculation from 3 to 5 years;
5. Discontinue paying the Health Care Offset on the DROP Accounts;
6. Change the benefit for reciprocal service where ASHERS pays benefits based on the high salary at ARDOT not the high salary with the State. (Actuarial savings have yet to be determined)

All of these items approved by the Highway Commission, and became law through the legislative process. This will have a positive impact on the funds unfunded liability.

Larry Dickerson
Retiree Board Member



Congratulations to Larry Dickerson for being re-elected as the Retiree representative on the ASHERS Board.

Address and Beneficiary Changes

Attention all retirees, if you move, please notify RoShunda Colclough at the Arkansas State Highway Employees' Retirement Office at (501) 569-2532. Besides keeping your address and phone number current, you also need to keep your beneficiaries current. You should contact the Group Insurance Office at (501) 569-2417 for beneficiary updates on your group health or life insurance. Since 2001, the Retirement System provides an additional lump-sum benefit of \$7,500 payable to your beneficiary at the retiree's death. If you have any questions about this benefit or the beneficiary for this benefit, please call (501) 569-2532.



From left to right: David Mayo – Sr. Vice President, John Watkins – President, and Doyle Hughes – Secretary/ Treasury.
Not Pictured: Johnny Parks – Vice President



AHTD Retirees' Association Facebook Page

The ARDOT Retirees' Association has a Facebook page that was set up and is maintained by Bettye Johnson. Our Facebook page is being enjoyed by many across the State. If you haven't checked it out, please do so at www.facebook.com and search for "AHTD Retirees Association." You may see some folks you haven't seen in a while. Please send any pictures and info to Bettye Johnson at bcj41@cablelynx.com.



Continued Importance of Dues:

Annual dues are still very critical to the success of our retirees' association. The district chapters are not meeting in person, so we strongly encourage meeting virtually using the Zoom app. Of course it is not the same, but it does allow you see each other in real time. All of the chapters are losing the momentum we once had prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. We need more than ever to maintain contact and support for your District Chapter. The annual dues fee has not changed, only \$15 for the retiree member and \$10 for their spouses.

We would appreciate any ideas on how we can remain strong and attract new retirees, even after the pandemic eventually goes away.

Thanks,
Doyle Hughes, State Secretary/Treasurer

The safety of our fellow retirees and their families are our top priority, and with the being said, we regret to inform you that the 2021 Statewide meeting, scheduled for October 28, 2021, has been canceled. We hope to see you all soon.




Thanks

In Loving Memory



Adams, Viva	Connell, Linda	Jackson, Jerry	Reeves, Yvonne
Allen, Bartus	Cornett, Danny	James, Charles	Rhodes, Donald
Anderson, Carl	Crowson, William	James, John	Richardson, George
Andry, Debra	Cunningham, Alvin	Johnson, Jimmy	Richardson, Marvin
Armstrong, Donald	Darter, Gilbretta	Johnson, Kenneth	Richmond, William
Arocha, Esteban	Davis, Bobbie	Jones, Bobbie	Riley, Gracie
Austin, Fred	Denton, Donna	Jones, Hersterly	Roark, Turner
Bailey, Jerry	Dial, Jesse	Jones, Sherril	Roberson, Harvey
Baine, Connie Ray	Doanld, Cage	Kirksey, Gerald	Roche l l e, Norman
Baker, Edna	Doolin, Thomas	Kirtley, Landon	Rowe, James
Beams, Jimmy	Douglas, James	Kittler, Ben	Ruth, Earlie
Bearden, Bobby	Drennon, Catherine	Kolb, Robert	Sawler, Sam
Bearden, Eton	Duffy, Margie	LaFevers, Charlie	Shelton Jr., William
Belk, Herman	Durham, Freda	Linton, Paul	Shockley, Statin
Bell, Danny	Elder, Herman	Lunsford, Barry	Sibley, Michael
Bell, Robert	Ella, Gumm	Markham, Malcolm	Simmons, Gregory
Bennett, Wanda	Ellis, T. David	Marks, Jerry	Simmons, Jacky
Bolin, Bobby	Elmore, Donald	Martin, Ernestine	Sims, Robert
Bowerman, Jimmie	Faulkner, Glendon	Martin, Mary	Sisco, John
Boyd, Bobby	Fennell, Elmo	McCarley, Olene	Smith, Dale
Bradke, Bruce	Ferguson, Earlene	McCollum, Clyde	Smith, Willy
Brady, Albert	Ferguson, Harold	Merritt, J C	Smith, Joe
Branch, Richard	Ferrell, Thomas	Moore, Laura	Stanton, Isabel
Brandon, Roosevelt	Fingers, James	Murdoch, Robert	Stark, Holly
Brasel, Lydia	Gates, Lee	Murphy Jr., Clyde	Steelman, David
Brewster, Billie	Getson Jr., Jimmie	Murphy, Thomas	Stewart, Scotty
Brown, Kenneth	Gilnert, Ruby	Neal, Robert	Strickland, Ronald
Brown, Nathan	Golden, Alex	Nelson, Leonard	Taunton, Karen
Burch, Claire	Hall, Eric	Nichols, Billy	Thomas, Charles
Calahan, Elmer	Hamilton, Jimmy	Nichols, Darrel	Thomas, Robert
Cansler, Jimmy	Harcrow, Gary	Niehaus, Elizabeth	Thompson, Neil
Caple, Sylvia	Hargraves, Dorothy	Oxford, Kenneth	Turner, Don
Carlton, Janis	Harville, Charles	Page, Earl	Vaughn, Johnny
Carpenter, William	Hayes, Ben	Paine, James	Venable, Charles
Carte, Bruce	Hayes, Bobby	Parker, Earnest	Vire, Alyce
Carte, Johnny	Hays, Barbara	Passmore, Bobby	Waggoner Jr., Arlington
Carter, Gerry	Helmert, Shirley	Pittman, Norman	Walker, Donnie
Carthan, Ed	Hodge, Bonnie	Plegge, John	Ward, Adrin
Cater, Marinette	Hoelscher, Raymond	Qualls, Eula	Watts, Edward
Caton, Walter	Hogan, Willie	Rackley, Betty	Willcockson, Harry
Chambers, Waylon	Hopkins, Julia	Raines, Bobby	Williams, Cecil
Clements Jr., Joseph	Howell, Daniel	Randall, Jack	Wilson, Judith
Coffell, Frank	Hubbard, Bobby	Rawls, Rickey	Wilson, Steve
Coffman, George	Hughes, Marjorie	Ray, Lonnie	Womack, Phyllis
Coffman, Marilyn	Irving, J S		

"We regret any omissions"



Chapter Reports

*****Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, meetings maybe postponed or canceled. Please check with you local officers for further information.**

District 1

Roy Morris-Pres. / Jimmy Smith-Vice Pres. / Terry Morris – Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: 2nd Thursday in March, June, Sept. & Dec. at Mikes in Colt, AR.

No news

District 2

Ben Novak-Pres. / Vacant-Vice Pres. / Vacant – Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: 3rd Friday. Quarterly, starting in March (Monticello, Pine Bluff, or Star City) 12:pm

No news

District 3

Don Donaldson-Pres. / Herbert Ross-Vice Pres. / LaVerne Arledge – Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: Quarterly, 2nd Wednesday of March, June, September and December at 10:30am.
CALL (870)777-2814 for meeting places

No news

District 4

Don Griffin-Pres. / Vacant-Vice Pres. / Paul Edgemon-Secretary/Treasurer
Meets: 3rd Wednesday, Monthly at Golden Corral, Ft. Smith, 11:00am

No news

District 5

Charles Sherley-Pres. / A.L. “Shorty” Coles-Vice Pres./Shirley Jones – Secretary / Jim Leggett - Treasurer
Meets: 2nd Saturday Monthly (Except July & Nov) at Wyatt’s, Batesville. 2nd Saturday July & Nov. at Western Sizzlin’ in Searcy

No news

District 6

Mike Selig-Pres. / Julia Hart-Vice Pres. / Mike Limbird-Secretary / Richard Blaine-Treasurer
Meets: 1st Monday, Little Rock, 12:00pm

January 2021 – The District 6 Retirees met via ZOOM on January 11, 2021. Our guest speaker for the meeting was Sharon Hawkins, Section Head - ARDOT GIS and Mapping. The Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) has requested all DOTs to develop a database of intersections on all public roads. In the database each intersection should have its own unique identifier, average daily traffic (ADT), geometry, and traffic control. This must be completed by 2026; the first listing in Arkansas showed 249,097 intersections to be included in the database. This initial listing had to be corrected for overpasses/underpasses, changes of road/street identifiers at an intersection. The database will include approach geometry of the intersecting roadways and traffic control devices (Stop Signs/Yield/Lights/Etc). The largest ADT shown going into intersection will be the ADT listed in the database for the intersection. The Covid 19 pandemic has actually helped in the completion since much of the database could be completed remotely and additional personnel could assist. Google maps/photos have also been used to complete the database. Unfortunately, intersections are changed/replaced/ moved during construction and maintenance operations so the database will have to be updated constantly. The database could be used with crash data analysis. The database will also be tied into an All-Signs database; a database inventory of all signs related to a route, to include regulatory, informational, and permitted signs.

February 2021 - The District 6 Retirees met via ZOOM on February 1, 2021. Our guest speaker for the meeting was Leah Greenfield, Program Director, LifeQuest of Arkansas. LifeQuest of Arkansas, a nonprofit organization, was founded in 1981 (originally called The Shepherd's Center, LifeQuest since 2003) to provide a framework through which adults can plan and create a more purposeful and rewarding life. Although LifeQuest is not a religious organization, eleven interfaith congregations joined together to fund and begin LifeQuest. Today there are many various affiliated congregations. LifeQuest membership currently stands at more than 1500. Participants come from 13 counties in central Arkansas. LifeQuest of Arkansas provides an infrastructure through which adults can create a more purposeful and rewarding post-retirement life. The LifeQuest *Curriculum Committee* plans the curriculum for each term and brings a balance of the tried-and-true favorite subjects and instructors as well as new and interesting topics and timely and varied subjects.

There are four terms each year: Fall (8 wks), Winter (8 wks), Spring (8 wks), and Summer (4 wks). The 8 week terms have a fee of \$65 and the 4-week term (Summer) has a fee of \$35. The registration fee covers all classes in the term. Classes run Monday-Friday and generally last 45 minutes. Some classes require an additional fee and separate registration. Online classes will occur Monday through Friday on Zoom and Facebook. The next term, Spring 2021, will begin in April 2021 with registration March 1; for further information, go to lifequestofarkansas.org.

March 2021 - The District 6 Retirees met via ZOOM on March 1, 2021 meeting of the AHTD. Our guest speaker for the meeting was Cindy Franklin, a Master Gardener. Cindy spoke on Native Plant Gardens; native plants are beneficial to native insects and birds. Native wildlife has co-evolved with native plants. When planning a native plant garden, things to consider are: urban ordinances/neighborhood covenants, curbside appeal, and an increased presence of some insects and animals. Maintaining native plants will require a reduced use of herbicides and pesticides, removing invasive and non-native species (such as privet, Bradford Pears, nandinas, etc.), and general maintenance of garden. Garden maintenance includes mulching, pruning, weeding, and leaf and limb removal. In planning the garden, remember to see how quickly the plants will spread and/or how big of a clump the plants will make at maturity. It may take three years or more for the plants to reach maturity. In planning a native plant garden remember the importance of trees; trees provide cover/habitat for birds and insects. Although often planted in Arkansas, dogwoods may not be a good consideration because of a disease currently affecting them. Choosing shrubs should also be chosen based on available area. Plants/shrubs to consider/include: red buckeye, coral honeysuckle, garden phlox, coneflower, milkweed, turk's cap, hardy hibiscus, beauty berry, goldenrod, fragrant aster, coreopsis, black-eyed susan, anise hyssop, blood and big blue salvia, sulfur cosmos, Mexican sunflower.

Larry Dickerson commented on Bills that effect ARDOT/ARDOT employees or retirees; previously filed in the Legislature, SBs 102, 103, 104, 105, 106 have all passed and been signed by the Governor. The Arkansas Employees Benefits Division (EBD) is looking at health costs which is now expecting \$31 million deficit if no actions are taken. Considering actions concerning active employees now, retirees later. Insurance has paid for fewer elective surgeries this year due to Covid 19. Ronda Walthall is monitoring meetings. Larry was not aware of any discussions in the Legislature concerning the current Retiree drug insurance.

April 2021 - The District 6 Retirees met via ZOOM April 5, 2021. Our guest speaker for the meeting was Mike Hill, State Heavy Bridge Maintenance Engineer for ArDOT. Mike has 27 years of service with Department and has been in Heavy Bridge Maintenance since 2007. Heavy Bridge Maintenance (HBM) is tasked with inspecting and maintaining approximately 60 of the largest and more unique bridges in Arkansas with a asset value of 1.5 billion USD. The Staff Heavy Bridge Maintenance Engineer is responsible for bridge repair design/details, oversight of 3 HBM repair crews, a bridge building crew, a polymer overlay crew, a paint crew and the Request for Proposals to hire Engineering firms to perform Underwater Bridge inspections. The HBM Division has expanded services/techniques in the last several years.

Bridges are being repaired with polymer surfacing which consists of cleaning the bridge deck and then applying a polymer coating with stone top layer. This year HBM started a bridge building crews; some state roads do not need bridges built to FHWA width/length requirements. HBM is now building bridges using precast bridge/culvert units.

Bridge inspections now utilize drones for infrared bridge deck condition and side scan sonar for below the surface condition surveys. In the very near future HBM will also begin inspecting and documenting condition of large culverts and drones are to be used for inspections of high mast poles. Inspections are documented onsite with portable computers and pictures taken during the inspections.

Bridge maintenance funds were previously split evenly among the ten highway districts but with current documentations, funds are now allotted by need; Districts with more bridges or bridge condition issues receive a larger share of funds. Heavy Bridge Maintenance has made bridge condition information available on the Department's web site (ardot.gov); go to www.ardot.gov/divisions/maintenance/heavy-bridge/arkansas-bridge-information. This will show bridge owner (state, county, city, / etc.); bridge condition; and a picture of the bridge.

May 2021 - The District 6 Retirees met via ZOOM May 3, 2021. Our guest speaker for the meeting was Eric Maynard, Asst. Chief of Education over Facilities for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC). Eric has worked for the AGFC for the past 22 years. The AGFC owns 23, 000 acres of land which includes five hatcheries, five nature centers, and four visitor centers. The AGFC fisheries personnel and wildlife officers help manage and enforce regulations on 600,000 acres of lakes, 100,000 miles of rivers and streams, 400,000 acres of wildlife areas, and 3,000,000 acres of public lands. AGFC provides advice to land owners concerning wildlife management of their acreage and how to apply for possible funding. There are two wildlife officers in each county; wildlife officers provide assistance for local police, sheriffs, and state police when requested. Wildlife officers receive sixteen weeks of training. A recent wildlife problem that AGFC has been working on is the eradication and control of feral hogs which are a destructive nuisance. The best means for controlling the feral hogs is through trapping rather than shooting because the hogs learn to avoid areas where others have been shot. AGFC has a number of educational operations that include a Game and Fish magazine, a yearly calendar (July-June), a television program, and regulation booklets for fishing and for hunting. AGFC started a youth shooting program for grades 6 – 12 and now has 4800 trapshooting participants. There is also archery program for schools which has 60,000 participants. Both the trapshooting and the archery programs have a yearly competition with winners receiving college scholarship moneys.

June 2021 - The District 6 Retirees met on June 7, 2021 for the Chapter's annual picnic at Maumelle Park with a lunch provided by the Chapter from Dickey's Barbecue Pit. Ronda Walthall from ArDOT Insurance provided information concerning retirees' insurance for the coming year. Act 1004 of 2021 transferred the governance of the insurance plans on a temporary basis from the now-dissolved State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Board to the State Board of Finance. The finance board has recommended to the Legislative Finance Committee that health insurance for retirees be increased by 5% for 2022. A letter to retirees will be sent out in August-September to officially state health insurance costs for 2022. Presently, there is no change in Retirees' drug plan expected. If there are any changes they should be known by the end of July 2021.

Robyn Smith from ArDOT Retirement noted that there were several changes in the Retirement and DROP plans for active employees but there were no changes in the programs that will effect retirees. Other state retirement systems have discovered problems in that the systems continued to make payments to retiree's families/beneficiaries after the retiree had passed away. To ensure this is not a problem with the ArDOT retirement system, there will be a Verification of Life Study conducted. Retirees will be sent forms for verifying they are, in fact, correctly receiving retirement payments; these must be notarized and returned to ArDOT. As previously announced the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) for 2021-2022 will be 1.45%, effective July 2021.

John Watkins, State President of the Retirees Association was in attendance and said the usual statewide meeting is still being considered if a meeting place can be found; the meeting room at the Bishop Center in Bryant may not be available. A newsletter is planned for Retirees and to be sent out in August.

July 2021 - The District 6 Retirees met on July 12, 2021. This meeting was held at the ArDOT Materials Division's Training Room. Our speaker for this meeting was Dr. Dan Scheiman, Director of Bird Conservation of the Audubon Society. Since 1970 there has been a loss of 3 billion birds. This is due to several factors; one of these factors has been the loss of 150 million acres of land to urban sprawl. This loss of urban sprawl can be alleviated by planting native plants in the urban environments. We need to balance appearance with food and habitat for birds. Although many people have bird feeders, birds feed their hatchlings with insects, not seeds. To fledge their hatchlings a chickadee will provide 6000-9000 caterpillars to the hatchlings. Native plants and trees provide more insects than non-native species. Consider birds in your yard maintenance, native trees and bushes provide cover for nests. Also, consider leaving dead trees and limbs, both of which provide cover for insects. Don't remove all of the leaf litter which also provide cover for insects. If you have bird feeders and bird baths make sure they are cleaned regularly (every 3-4 weeks). Remove threats such as pesticides and cats (keep indoors). Birds will often crash into windows; this can be prevented by hanging strings at a 4 inch vertical spacing in the windows near bird feeders. A Bird Friendly Yard Certification can be obtained through the Audubon Society.

John Watkins, State President of the Retirees Association was in attendance and said the usual statewide meeting will be held in the meeting room at the Bishop Center in Bryant on October 28, 2021.

District 7

Michael Nelson – Pres./ Dannie Launius-Vice Pres. / Anna Jane Reddin – Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: 2nd Thursday, every other month (Starting in January) Cardinal Cafe, Camden, AR 11:00am

No News

District 8

Vacant-Pres. / Don Wilkinson-Vice Pres. / Martha Payne– Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: 1st Monday, every other month (starting in February) Western Sizzlin', Russellville, 11:00am

The District 8 Chapter of the Arkansas Highway Retirees' Association will be having a meeting on September 6th, 2021 at 11am at the Western Sizzling in Russellville. If you have any question, please contact Martha Payne at (479)264-4661.

District 9

Bill Phillips-Pres. / James McIntosh-Vice Pres. / Roy Brasel – Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: 3rd Friday, Quarterly (January, April, July, & October) Western Sizzlin', Harrison, 11:00am

No news

District 10

Vacant-Pres. /Vacant-Vice Pres. /Vacant – Secretary-Treasurer

No news

NWA

Sam Turner-Pres. /Jerry Stuckey-Vice Pres. /Teresa Maze – Secretary-Treasurer
Meets: 2nd Tuesday every other month (starting in February), Western Sizzlin', Springdale, 12:30p

No news

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES
INC.



Doyle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer
9112 Leatrice Drive.
Little Rock, AR 72227

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We urge you to fill out the Membership Application Form below. You can turn it in to your local Chapter Secretary/Treasurer or mail application and \$15.00 annual dues to: **Doyle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, 9112 Leatrice Dr., Little Rock, AR 72227.** Make your check payable to: **AHTD Retirees Association.**

2022 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Retiree Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15 Fee Enclosed
Spouse Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$10 Fee Enclosed
Phone Number _____	Year You Retired _____	Division/ District No. _____
Address _____ Street or Route & Box No. _____		City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
E-Mail Address _____		
Signed _____		